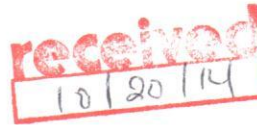




COUNTY OF DUTCHESS
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

October 17, 2014



*in mail
to Town Hall*

To: Planning Board, Town of Amenia

Re: **Referral 14-340, Silo Ridge Resort Community Special Use Permit and Phase 1 Site Plan**

The Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development has reviewed the submitted referral for countywide and intermunicipal impacts as outlined in General Municipal Law (Article 12B, §239-l/m).

ACTION

The applicant is requesting special use permit approval for the Master Development Plan for the Silo Ridge Resort Community, as well as site plan approval for Phase 1 (of 3) of the project.

COMMENTS

Amenia is home to one of the most iconic views in the region: the Harlem Valley as seen from DeLavernge Hill. It is critical that any development on the Silo Ridge parcels retains the rural nature and long expanse that makes the view from DeLavernge Hill so notable.

Protect View from DeLavernge Hill

We have reviewed the "Confirmatory Visual Analysis Phase I and II" and are concerned about the proposed mitigation – the fence and 4' hedge – shown at the edge of the Route 44 hairpin turn. It appears this measure will block the full view of the valley from the road, rather than simply screen the Silo Ridge development. A more acceptable solution would be to screen the proposed buildings farther down the hill and around the actual structures. The Master Development Plan shows more landscaping around the homes than the actual site plan, which instead shows new trees primarily located along the road rights-of-way. The Planning Board, town consultants, and applicant should work together to augment the planting plan to better reflect the amount and placement of landscaping shown in the Master Development Plan, and to ensure that this will provide additional and appropriate screening of the development through an amended visual analysis.

In addition to increasing the number of new trees around the homes, we recommend some larger specimen trees, possibly from elsewhere on the properties, be relocated to these screening areas. This will create a more immediate screening effect and will provide baseline vegetation for new 3"–4" caliper specimens to fill in. Without a basic fabric of more mature trees, it will likely take 10–20 years for the new plantings to reach maturity and provide screening.

Limit Disturbance of Steep Slopes

The applicant has requested waivers from the Town to allow development on approximately 92 acres of land that is 15%-30% slopes, and approximately 22 acres of additional land that exceeds 30% slopes. In order to reduce the impacts to steep slopes and related concerns, such as stormwater runoff, we suggest minimizing to the greatest extent possible the granting of waivers for building on slopes greater than 20%, which is the grade used to define steep slopes in Greenway Connections.

RECOMMENDATION

We do not oppose the special use permit for the Master Development Plan. However, the sweeping view of the valley from DeLavernge Hill needs to be preserved as part of this development. For the reasons stated above, we recommend the Board not grant site plan approval for Phase I until the following condition has been met:

1. The proposed fence and hedge around the Route 44 hairpin turn is removed, and the planting plan is updated to include alternative screening farther down the hill and around the buildings.

Voting and Reporting Requirements: If the Board acts contrary to our recommendation, the law requires that it do so by a majority plus one of the full membership of the Board and that it notify us of the reasons for its decision.



Eoin Wrafter, AICP
Acting Commissioner